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Letter dated 2 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you the attached letter which I have sent to Mr. Mladen Ivanić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regarding the draft resolution on Srebrenica (see annex).

I would be most grateful if you would circulate the present letter and the attached letter as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**

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Annex to the letter dated 2 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

2 July 2015

Thank you for the letter which you sent to me and to my colleagues within the Security Council. I am writing to clarify our intention in relation to the draft resolution which the United Kingdom is drafting.

Our intentions match exactly those which you set out in your letter. We believe, like you, that it is essential, 20 years on, to commemorate the victims, and to reflect on the lessons of those terrible events for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the international community and for the United Nations itself, to ensure that we never repeat the mistakes of the past, either in your country or anywhere else in the world. The United Nations has acknowledged its own institutional failures over Srebrenica: that it did not do enough to prevent that genocide. This anniversary is an important opportunity for us to take stock, and to ensure that as an organization we are better equipped to deal with future challenges.

At the same time, we agree that the resolution must recognize that there were innocent victims on all sides during the war, including in Srebrenica and the surrounding areas. The wounds of the past must be dealt with, by supporting victims and by bringing the perpetrators of crimes, whoever they may be, to justice. And the process of reconciliation must be completed, so that all the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina can turn to the future with confidence and hope. These have always been our intentions but, in response to your letter, we have made some additional changes to the text to make this even clearer.

At the same time, we believe that true reconciliation cannot be built upon a reluctance or a refusal to accept and to come to terms with the actions of the past. What happened in Srebrenica was the worst single crime in Europe since the Second World War. And both international and your domestic courts have confirmed that this crime meets the threshold for a description as genocide under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. That is not a political statement. It is a legal fact. Genocide is a crime, and those who committed it are criminals who should be punished as such. To say so is not "anti-Serbian", as some have alleged. As the judge in one of the cases in The Hague made clear in his judgement: "I seek to judge an accused. I do not judge a people. I consider that to associate this evil with Serbian identity would be an insult to the Serbian people. But it would be just as monstrous not to attach any name to this evil because that could be an offence to the Serbs." We do not link this crime to the Serb people, and we do not believe that others should do so.

Unfortunately, the political reactions to this resolution show clearly that not enough has been done to make real progress on reconciliation, either in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in the wider region. And that is a source of concern for the Security Council, in its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In recent days, we have heard public denials not just of the applicability of the word "genocide", but even of the facts around the number of those killed. This

sort of political rhetoric is distasteful, destabilizing and deeply hurtful to the victims.

Like you, we want a secure, stable and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United Kingdom has invested heavily in your country over many years. The European Union reform initiative which, together with Germany, we launched last year is testament to our goodwill. Together with our international partners we want to work with you, and with the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to confront and to overcome the legacy of the past, so that it cannot continue — as it has in recent weeks — to divide and to disrupt your present and your future.

It is for these reasons that we remain committed to developing a balanced and forward-looking resolution, one that commemorates the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica — those who died, and those left behind — that recognizes the suffering experienced by all sides in the war and that calls for justice and reconciliation as the basis for a positive and confident future for all the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I very much hope that, in this aim, we will succeed in securing not just your support, but also that of our partners within the Security Council.

Matthew **Rycroft**